

CHAPTER 5. REGULATORY EQUIVALENCY AND WAIVER

SUBCHAPTER 1. EQUIVALENCY AND WAIVER PROCESS

6A:5-1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide regulatory flexibility for school districts to meet the requirements of the rules contained in the New Jersey Administrative Code Title 6 and Title 6A; this includes: educational services commissions, jointure commissions, regional day schools, Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf, private schools for the handicapped, college operated programs and programs operated by the Departments of Human Services and Corrections as well as school districts; agencies and clinics are excluded. Regulatory flexibility may be granted as a waiver to a specific rule or as an equivalency to a specific rule so that school districts can provide effective and efficient educational programs. The Commissioner, with authority delegated by the New Jersey State Board of Education, may on a case-by-case basis, approve a waiver or an equivalency to a specific rule.

6A:5-1.2 Definitions

The following words and terms, as used in this chapter, shall have the following meanings, unless the content clearly indicates otherwise.

“Commissioner” means Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education.

“Department” means the New Jersey Department of Education.

"Equivalency" means approval to achieve the intent of a specific rule through an alternate means that is different from, yet judged to be comparable to or as effective as, those prescribed within the rule.

"Waiver" means approval to avoid compliance either with the specific procedures or the substantive requirements of a specific rule for reasons that are judged educationally, organizationally and fiscally sound.

"State Board" means the New Jersey State Board of Education.

6A:5-1.3 Criteria for an equivalency or waiver

- (a) An equivalency or waiver to a specific rule must meet the following criteria:
 - 1. The spirit and intent of New Jersey Statutes Title 18A, applicable Federal laws and regulations, and the New Jersey Administrative Code Title 6 and 6A are served by granting the equivalency or waiver.
 - i. Certification requirements of N.J.S.A. 18A:26-2 shall not be violated;
 - 2. The provision of a thorough and efficient education to the students in the district is not compromised as a result of the equivalency or waiver; and
 - 3. There will be no risk to student health, safety or civil rights by granting the equivalency or waiver.

6A:5-1.4 Equivalency process

- (a) The Commissioner, with authority delegated by the State Board for the purpose of this rule, may approve an equivalency to a specific rule based on an application submitted by a school district. The completed application must be signed by the chief school administrator and approved by the district board of education. The application developed by the Department and completed by the school district shall at a minimum:

1. Describe what the school district intends to accomplish that is currently prevented or disallowed by an existing rule;
2. Describe the conditions or reasons for the proposed equivalency including the reference of the specific rule which necessitates the proposal;
3. Describe the projected measurable results which will provide programs or services that are at least equal to the required current rule; and
4. Demonstrate that the school district's educational community, including the district board of education, parents, administration and staff, have been informed of the proposed equivalency to the specific rule and have been provided the opportunity for public comment.

6A:5-1.5 Waiver process

- (a) The Commissioner, with authority delegated by the State Board for the purpose of this rule, may approve a waiver to a specific rule based on an application submitted by a school district. The completed application must be signed by the chief school administrator and approved by the district board of education. The application developed by the Department and completed by the school district shall at a minimum:

1. Describe what the school district intends to accomplish that is currently prevented or disallowed by an existing rule;
2. Describe the conditions or reasons for the proposed waiver including the reference of the specific rule which necessitates the proposal;
3. Describe the projected measurable results which will demonstrate that the waiver is educationally, organizationally and fiscally sound; and

4. Demonstrate that the school district's educational community, including the district board of education, parents, administration and staff, have been informed of the proposed waiver to the specific rule and have been provided the opportunity for public comment.

6A:5-1.6 Review and duration of the equivalency or waiver

- (a) The school district shall submit reports and documentation of the measurable results for periodic review from time to time as required by the Commissioner.
- (b) The Commissioner shall present quarterly reports to the State Board of the equivalencies and waivers that have been granted.
- (c) The Commissioner shall evaluate the equivalencies and waivers that were granted to Title 6 and propose amendments to the Administrative Code to the State Board as appropriate.
- (d) The Commissioner shall annually evaluate the equivalencies and waivers granted to Title 6A to determine whether amendments to the Administrative Code should be proposed to the State Board.
- (e) The Commissioner may rescind the equivalency or waiver to the rule if the district is not complying with the intent of the specific rule. The Commissioner shall provide the district with a reasonable period of time to comply with all applicable rules after the equivalency or waiver approval is rescinded.
- (f) An equivalency or waiver shall not be granted for a period of more than three years.

6A:5-1.7 Appeals

- (a) Any party aggrieved by a determination of the Commissioner to grant or deny an equivalency or waiver pursuant to this chapter may appeal that determination in

accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:4.

- (b) Any party seeking to challenge an action by a district board of education on the grounds that such action is in violation of the school laws shall initiate a contested case pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:3, notwithstanding that the action being challenged may involve the implementation of a waiver or equivalency granted by the Commissioner.